DEVIL'S REIGN CHAPTER TWO
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TOP COW COMICS
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DEVIL'S REIGN

CHAPTER TWO

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MARVEL® COMICS

CYBLADE / GHOST RIDER

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SPECIAL THANKS TO image COMICS

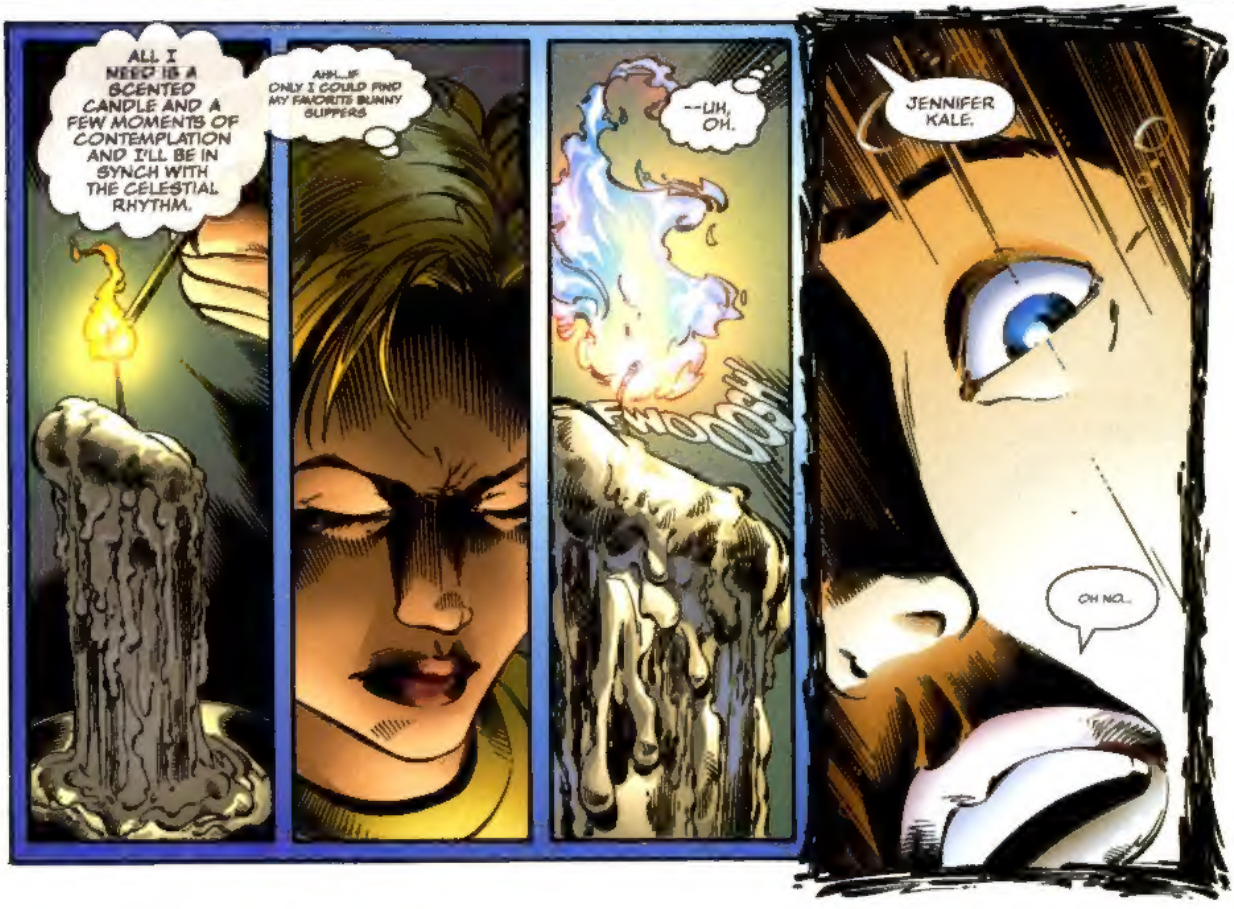
BEHOLD, MEPHISTO, THE DEMON KING, AS HE CONTEMPLATES A NEW WORLD..
...AND A NEW HELL.
HAH HAH HAH HAHAH HAH!
YES, MY LITTLE SKRATCH...CAN YOU SENSE THE TINY SPARK OF NEWFOUND JOY INSIDE MY IMMENSE AND TWISTED SOUL?
IMAGINE...A WHOLE DIFFERENT UNIVERSE FULL OF BETRAYAL, LUST AND VIOLENCE. MILLIONS OF INNOCENTS TO MAKE SUFFER. BILLIONS OF NEW SOULS TO CORRUPT.
AND IT'S MINE. ALL MINE!
HAH HAH HAH HAH!

I WAS GROWING TOO WEARY OF MY OWN WORLD AND IT'S ENDLESSLY REPETITIVE CYCLES OF CRIME AND ORDINARY DAMNATION.
OF COURSE, WHEN GOOD FATE INTERVENED AND ALLOWED ME TO DISCOVER AN INTER-DIMENSIONAL GATEWAY LEFT BEHIND BY AN ANCIENT RACE CALLED THE T'SARAL...
...HOW COULD I NOT TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUBJUGATE A NEW WORLD AND CREATE A NEW DARK REALM...THE FIRST OF MANY TO COME.
ALREADY I HAVE CORRUPTED THE NOBLEST OF THIS WORLD'S HEROES.
INDEED, MY BURDEN OF BOREDOM IS OVER.
LORD...PLEASE ...MY EARS...SO SENSITIVE.
HAH! HAH! HAH! HAH!
OF COURSE THEY ARE, SKRATCH... THAT'S THE WAY I DESIGNED THEM.
SINCE YOU'RE SO UNHAPPY WITH THEM, I'LL HAVE TO RIP THEM OFF.
BUT FIRST, I WILL SIT BACK AND ENJOY MY HANDIWORK IN PROGRESS...
...AND GLOAT AT HOW DISORGANIZED AND PETTY THIS WORLD'S HEROES ARE.
EVEN THE VAUNTED CYBERFORCE FALLS APART WITHOUT HEATWAVE TO LEAD THEM.

BLADE...SOME SAY SHE IS THE MOST RUTHLESS MEMBER OF THE TEAM, CYBERFORCE. SHE DOESN'T DISAGREE.
SHE PACES IN HER NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT, USUALLY THE ONLY PLACE SHE CAN FIND PEACE OF MIND. OF COURSE THERE IS NONE TO BE FOUND TONIGHT.
HER TEAM LEADER HAS DISAPPEARED. HER TEAM, THE ONLY FAMILY SHE HAS LEFT, IS IN TOTAL DISARRAY. LIFE HAS BECOME TROUBLING.
SHE WEARS HER DEAD FATHER'S SILK ROBE...UNCONSCIOUSLY LOOKING FOR SOME SORT OF COMFORT TO EASE HER WORRIED MIND.
IT DOESN'T WORK.
THINGS ARE WRONG... VERY WRONG.
IT'S INEXCUSABLE FOR HEATWAVE TO DISAPPEAR LIKE THIS.
DOESN'T HE REALIZE HOW INTEGRAL HE IS? NONE OF US ARE QUALIFIED TO LEAD... NO MATTER WHAT SOME OF US MAY THINK.
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GO OFF ON MY OWN. I KNOW IT.
AND WHY CAN'T I SHAKE THE FEELING THAT HEATWAVE'S DISAPPEARANCE IS JUST THE BEGINNING.
...THAT THINGS ARE GOING TO GET MUCH WORSE THAN ANY OF US CAN EVER IMAGINE.

MEANWHILE, ACROSS ANOTHER DIMENSION...A SIMILAR UNIVERSE...
...ON AN EARTH THAT'S A MARVEL IN IT'S OWN RIGHT...
...A YOUNG MAN, WHO HAPPENS TO BE THE HUMAN HOST FOR A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE, SITS AND LISTENS TO HARSH TRUTHS.
DANIEL KETCH, THINGS ARE WORSE THAN YOU CAN EVER IMAGINE.
YES MA'AM.
YOUR GPA IS HORRIBLE. YOUR ATTENDANCE TO CLASSES IS HORRIBLE. I'LL BET YOU THOUGHT BEING IN CITY COLLEGE WOULD BE EASY AND THAT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORK AS HARD.
NO, MA'AM. IT'S NOT LIKE THA--
WELL, YOU'RE WRONG. YOU KEEP MESSING UP, DANIEL, AND WE'LL BE FORCED TO TAKE AWAY YOUR FINANCIAL AID AND GIVE IT TO SOMEONE WHO'S MORE DESERVING. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES, MA'AM.
SHE'S RIGHT. I'M MESSING UP, WAY TOO BAD.
I JUST CAN'T GET A GRIP ON THINGS. EVERYTIME I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT IN MY OWN LIFE TO FINISH...
I KNOW THE GHOST RIDER IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN FIGHT SOME OF THE THINGS THAT THREATEN THE WORLD, BUT STILL...
...THE GHOST RIDER TAKES OVER MY BODY AND HAS TO FIGHT SOME DEMON OR MONSTER OR HAS MY APARTMENT WRECKED OR MY FAMILY THREATENED OR...
...JEEZ, I CAN'T EVEN CARRY ON A DECENT RELATIONSHIP.
...WHY DO I ALWAYS HAVE TO SACRIFICE MY LIFE?

THE EAST VILLAGE... AND A RUNDOWN AND PATCHED TOGETHER APARTMENT THAT BELONGS TO JENNIFER KALE, SORCERESS AND SCHOLAR...
...AND BUNDLE OF RAW NERVES.
OKAY... I'M JUST GONNA SIT BACK AND CHILL.
GOD...I THINK I FORGOT HOW. IT'S BEEN SO LONG BEFORE I'VE HAD EVEN A MOMENT TO MYSELF.
EVER SINCE I MET DANNY AND HIS BROTHER, BLAZE, AND FOUND OUT THAT THEY WERE RELATED TO ME BY BLOOD...
...LIFE HAS JUST BEEN... BIZARRE.


ALL I NEED IS A SCENTED CANDLE AND A FEW MOMENTS OF CONTEMPLATION AND I'LL BE IN SYNCH WITH THE CELESTIAL RHYTHM.
AHH...IF ONLY I COULD FIND MY FAVORITE BUNNY SLIPPERS
--UH, OH.
WOOSH
JENNIFER KALE.
OH NO..

JENNIFER KALE...I AM ETERNITY.
--I'M NOT JUST A PAWN TO BE USED BY SOME COSMIC ENTITY, NO MATTER HOW INFINITELY POWERFUL THEY AR--
SILENCE!
YOUR CONSENT IS NOT NECESSARY. IT IS THE GHOST RIDER'S ABILITIES WE NEED.
I...I KNOW.
I HAVE NEED OF YOU. THERE IS A BALANCE TO RESTORE...AND A UNIVERSE TO BE SAVED..
YOU ARE MERELY THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH WE WILL WORK OUR POWER.
OH, GREAT.
NO..I'M SORRY, SIR, BUT...
...I REALLY NEED A BREAK AND--

THE D TRAIN...STILL IN THE BRONX.
UMM, WHEN I GET HOME I'M GONNA PIG OUT ON ABOUT A GALLON OF ICE CREAM, MAYBE EVEN PICK UP A SIX PA--
HI MOM
DANNY KETCH'S DAY ISN'T GETTING ANY BETTER.
AW NO, NOT AGAIN.
WOOOSH!
HOLY COW!
JENNIFER? IS THAT YOU?
WELL, KINDA...IN A WAY.
ETERNITY INFUSED ME WITH THE POWER OF TIME AND SPACE...SO I COULD FIND YOU AND TRANSPORT YOU.
I'M SORRY FOR DRAGGING YOU INTO THIS, DANNY, BUT I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE.
MEPHISTO ISN'T DEAD. HE'S IN ANOTHER UNIVERSE CAUSING SOME MAJOR DAMAGE TO THE NATURAL EQUILIBRIUM AND STUFF.
WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ME? I'VE GOT MY OWN PROBLEMS AND--
YEAH, I KNOW...BUT LIKE I SAID...WE DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE. IT'S THE GHOST RIDER THEY WANT TO FIGHT THIS...AND IF YOU'RE UNWILLING...
...I'M SUPPOSED TO TRIGGER YOUR TRANSFORMATION...

...WHETHER YOU WANT IT OR NOT.
FORGIVE ME, DANNY.
FWLSHHH!
NOOO!
GCK...
WHO...
JENNIFER KALE?
WHO CALLS ME INTO BEING.
YOU RECOGNIZE ME. LUCKY ME.
LISTEN, RIDER. YOU'RE DESPERATELY NEEDED.
IF THERE IS A CHANCE TO STOP HIS EVIL ONCE AND FOR ALL, GIVE IT TO ME.
MEPHISTO!
DAMN HIM.
MEPHISTO IS STILL ALIVE, AND HE'S WREAKING HAVOC ON ANOTHER DIMENSION AND--

GEE HOW'D I GUESS YOU'D SAY THAT
YOU'RE SUCH A TROOPER
UH... BEHOLD THE DOORWAY TO ANOTHER BUT [illegible] WORLD.
YOUR JOB, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT, IS TO JOURNEY TO THIS WORLD AND FIND THE DARK SOUL, MEPHISTO, WHO IS AT THIS VERY MOMENT PLOTTING TO CHANGE THAT WORLD INTO HIS VERY OWN HELL.
UNDERSTAND?
YOU MUST DEFEAT HIM BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY
[illegible]OOP.
PEACHY
SERIOUSLY, THOUGH I HOPE YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIM. NOBODY DESERVES SOMETHING AS NASTY AS MEPHISTO RUINING THIER LIVES.
GOOD LUCK, AND GOD-SPEED.
YOUR CONCERN IS NOTED...AND MISPLACED. I WILL DO MY JOB.
SHOOP!
MY CONCERN'S FOR DANNY. IF YOU DIE, HE'S TRAPPED IN THE EMPTINESS OF THE VOID FOREVER
THAT KIND OF HELL IS IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE
MAN, I REALLY WISH I HAD MY BUNNY SLIPPERS NOW

HE[illegible]HER UNIVERSE
SPECIFICALLY, A TERRACE OVER LOOKING THIS WORLD'S DOWN-TOWN NEW YORK
CYBLADE WATCHES, FEELING MUCH LIKE THE AREA SHE GAZES UPON. DEPRESSED AND ANGRY.
THE ONLY FAMILY I COULD EVER TRUST AND ACCEPT ARE THE CYBERFORCE
THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE THEM IS TO FIND THE EMOTIONAL CENTER AND BRING IT BACK
I'VE GOT TO FIND HEATWAVE
WHAT THE--
MASSIVE ENERGY BURSTS IN THE MIDDLE OF TIMES SQUARE?
NOT GOOD
MUST BE SOME DAMN FOOL VILLAIN TRYING SOMETHING PREPOSTEROUS AND VAINGLORIOUS AGAIN
JUST WISH I COULD SHAKE THIS FEELING OF DREAD
I'LL JUST GET IN THE WAY OF MY WORK

ZARKO'S NEW REALM
A WORK IN PROGRESS
AH, YESSS...
IT'S ALL TAKING SHAPE QUITE NICELY.
THIS WORLD HAS AS MUCH NEGATIVE ENERGY TO MINE AS THE PREVIOUS... PERHAPS EVEN MORE--
WHAT'S THIS? AN ABBARATION. SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T BELONG HERE.
SOMETHING FAMILIAR--
NO!! I CANNOT BE!
NOT THE ACCURSED GHOST RIDER!!
Cabrera's
ALL-NUDE REVU
XXX MOVIES 25
FOOM!
VROOOOMM

HOLY COW! DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?!
THIS WORLD!
I CAN'T REALLY SEE MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IT AND MY OWN
WHY WOULD ETERNITY SEND ME HERE ON THIS STREET?
HOW WILL I EVER FIND MEPHISTO?
WHAT IN HELL
AIEEEEK! IT'S A DEMON!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS--
WHAT'S IN THIS?
BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!
-AS LONG AS IT KEEPS AWAY FROM ME!!
-M FREE!-

I SEE THAT, WHILE THIS MAY BE A DIFFERENT UNIVERSE, THE HUMAN RESPONSE TO MY IMAGE IS STILL THE SAME.
FEAR AND DISTRUST
SHWAK!
WAI
CHUNG!
CHOK!
NOW THAT YOUR ANNOYING PRESENCE IS OUT OF THE WAY...
...I CAN GET BACK TO MY WORK...
OF FINDING THE DEMON KING, MEPHISTO.
ALTHOUGH, HOW I'M GOING TO DO THIS, I HAVEN'T A CLUE
SO, IF THIS MONSTER THINKS HE CAN COME TO THIS BEAUTIFUL CITY AND JUST ASSAULT THE LOCAL CONSTABLES.

HE HAS ONE LAST THOUGHT COMING.
HAAAAI!!
WOK
ungh!
SHE'S OBVIOUSLY ONE OF THIS WORLD'S HEROES. OR IT'S VILLAINS.
DAMN I JUST DON'T HAVE TIME TO FIGHT WARRIOR WOMEN RIGHT NOW
STOP THIS! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND I'M HERE TO SAVE YOUR WOR--

QUIET!
TAKE YOUR BEATING LIKE A MAN!
KICK!
ACTUALLY, I'M GLAD YOU SHOWED UP.
PUNISHING SOME FOOL SUPER CRIMINAL IS EXACTLY WHAT I NEED TO RELIEVE SOME OF MY STRESS.
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, ANYWAY? FIREHEAD? BONE-FACE?
MY NAME IS GHOST RIDER.
AND YOU'RE BEGINNING TO ANNOY ME.
HSSSSS.
I SEE WHERE ALL THIS IS GOING.
THE MIS-COMMUNICATION AND POINTLESS BATTLE ENDING IN COOPERATION AND MUTUAL RESPECT.
NOT THIS TIME. YOU WILL BE DESTROYED.
RISE, MY SOLDIERS. RISE.

AND CRUSH THEM!

IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN GIVE?

I DON'T THINK YOU'RE EVEN CAPABLE OF MAKING ME RAISE A SWEAT

WE SHALL SEE, WON'T WE?

PREPARE TO RELEASE YOUR TEARS OF PAIN

WHAT? IN YOUR DREAMS SKULL MAN

AGAIN, WE WILL SEE NOW IF YOU'LL DO ME THE SMALL FAVOR OF--

DUCKING

WHAT?!

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

HSSSSSS!

THE DEMONICALLY TRANSFORMED, OF COURSE

WOMAN I NEED TO KNOW ONE THING ARE YOU A HERO OR A VILLAIN?

HUH?

ANSWER ME

GOOD

I I'M A HERO

HSSSSSS!
I AM TOO
WHAT SAY WE JOIN FORCES AGAINST THE ARMIES OF DARKNESS
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?
THE DARK LORD MEPHISTO HAS WORMED HIS WAY ONTO YOUR WORLD. HE MEANS TO TAKE IT OVER
I'M HERE TO STOP THAT
MEPHISTO? ISN'T THAT THE DEVIL'S NAME?
HE IS THE LORD OF DEVILS... AND THE WORST EVIL IN ANY WORLD
IT IS MY DUTY TO STOP HIM
UNTIL ONE OF US IS DESTROYED FOREVER.

THEY THESE DEMONS ARE DEFEATED EASILY
TOO EASILY BEWARE, IF I KNOW MEPHISTO, HE HAS SOME TRICK UP HIS SLEEVE
CAN ALL THIS MESS BE LINKED TO THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MY FRIEND HEATHA
YOU ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS, CYBLADE
WHY WASTE YOUR LAST BREATHS?
KILLRAZOR! WHU--YOU'RE SPEAKING?!
NO. NOT KILLRAZOR. NOT ANYMORE
THANKS TO THE MASTER, I AM SO MUCH MORE.
I AM TRANSCENDED INTO THE DARK GOD I WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE. JUST AS YOUR PRECIOUS HEATHA HAS BEEN
PERHAPS IF YOU BOW DOWN BEFORE THE LORD MEPHISTO, YOU WILL BE SPARED A PAINFUL DEATH.
KILLRAZOR
I BOW TO NO ONE
SOON!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE...
...WHO YOU ARE OR WHY YOU POSSESS THIS HERO...
...AS FOR YOUR PATHETIC OFFER...
HERE'S THE ONLY ANSWER YOU DESERVE!
SHOOOM!
KRAK!
SHUT UP!
YOU ALWAYS DID THINK YOU WERE BETTER THAN YOU ARE, CYBLADE.
BUT THE SAD AND BITTER TRUTH IS THAT YOU ARE NOTHING! INSIGNIFICANT!
YOU WEREN'T EVEN CONSIDERED IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO RECEIVE THE DARK GIFT!

AHHH!
GO TO HELL!
YOU BETRAYED ANYONE WHO EVER KNEW YOU!
HAH!
YOU BETRAYED YOURSELF!
BETTER TO BE CONSIDERED INSIGNIFICANT BY A DEMON...
...THAN TO BE CONSIDERED TOO WEAK TO RESIST TEMPTATION!

HAVE YOU HAD ENOUGH?
GET OFF ME! I---
YES. I HAVE.
SSSSSSSS!
GOOD. NOW IT IS MY TURN.
HE IS CORRUPTED BY MEPHISTO'S POISON. HE HAS SINNED.
NOW, HE MUST BE PUNISHED.
HE WILL TASTE THE SEARING HELLFIRE OF MY PENANCE STARE... AND PERHAPS HIS SOUL CAN STILL BE CLEANSED.
SSSSSSS!
NO...WAIT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING...?
NOOOO!

HAH HAH HAH HAH
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU CAN STOP ME NOW?
NO, MEPHISTO. YOU ARE MISTAKEN.
THIS TIME I WILL CRUSH YOU.
WOMAN. THERE IS A WAR COMING. YOU MUST BE PREPARED.. FOR HE WILL TAKE NO--
--PRISONERS?
MEPHISTO! YOU MONSTER!
GHOST RIDER! YOU WILL DO NO GOOD HERE. THIS WILL BE MY WORLD!!
YOU NEVER HAD ENOUGH POWER TO DEFEAT ME.